

The Fairbanks North Star Borough (FNSB) contains a persistent PM_{2.5} nonattainment area that experiences some of the highest PM_{2.5} concentrations in the nation. As a result of extensive efforts by the State of Alaska, Fairbanks North Star Borough, and EPA, there have been significant improvements in air quality in the FNSB since the area was initially designated as nonattainment over a decade ago. Unfortunately, wintertime air quality levels are still nearly twice the standard. This failure to meet the standard has exposed the residents of FNSB to unhealthy PM_{2.5} levels and resulted in a requirement for Alaska to revise its Serious Area Plan to ensure that attainment is achieved as soon as practicable.

UPCOMING MILESTONES:

- **Oct 2020** – EPA provides comments to Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) on [ADEC's proposed plan to meet the requirements of Clean Air Act \(CAA\) Section 189\(d\) \(5 percent Plan\) Serious Area Plan revisions](#) during its public comment period.
- **Fall/ Winter 2020** – EPA completes review of initial Serious Area Plan and publishes proposed approval or disapproval in the Federal Register.
- **Fall/ Winter 2020** – EPA discussions continue with the state and certain electricity generating utilities to address ADEC's control technology determinations in the initial Serious Area Plan.
- **Dec 2020** – ADEC must submit to EPA a revised Serious Area Plan meeting the additional requirements of CAA Section 189(d).

Commented [B1]: I revised based on recent instructions on terminology from OGC.

BACKGROUND:

- In 2009 a portion of the FNSB was designated nonattainment for the 24-hour PM_{2.5} standard.
- Exposure to elevated levels of PM_{2.5} can cause myriad health problems, including premature death in people with heart or lung disease, irregular heartbeat, and aggravated asthma.
- Wood combustion for residential heating is the primary contributor to the nonattainment problem. Past and current control strategies have focused on reducing woodsmoke through implementation of a curtailment program and a transition to cleaner fuels.
- The area failed to attain the standard by the Moderate Area attainment date of December 31, 2015 and was designated as a Serious Attainment Area in ~~April~~ May 2017.
- On December 13, 2019, Alaska submitted a state implementation plan (SIP) to address Serious nonattainment area planning requirements (Fairbanks Serious Area Plan). Because Alaska was certain that the Fairbanks Serious Area Plan would not achieve the standard by December 31, 2019, the State included a request to extend the Serious area attainment date.
- On October 2, 2020, EPA denied this request because it did not meet statutory requirements and also found that the area failed to meet the Serious Area attainment date of December 31, 2019.
- As a result of the area failing to attain the standard by December 31, 2019, the CAA requires Alaska to submit ~~a revised Serious Area Plan meeting the additional requirements of CAA Section 189(d) (5 percent Plan)~~ a revised Serious Area Plan meeting the additional requirements of CAA Section 189(d) (5 percent Plan) that meets the requirements of CAA Section 189(d) by December 31, 2020. Alaska provided an opportunity for public comment on the draft 5 percent Plan on September 10, 2020.

- Notwithstanding the fact that the Fairbanks Serious Area Plan failed to achieve the standard, EPA is required to approve or disapprove the Fairbanks Serious Area Plan by January 9, 2021. EPA staff are completing an initial review of the Fairbanks Serious Area Plan.
- In addition to core CAA programmatic funds, by the end of 2019, the EPA has awarded ADEC with \$10.6 million of Targeted Airshed funds to improve air quality in Fairbanks through funding for the woodstove changeout program and the removal and replacement of over 2,500 solid fuel devices. EPA will award an additional \$14.7 million by December 2020.

KEY EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS:

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| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Congress | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> States | <input type="checkbox"/> Tribes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Media | <input type="checkbox"/> Other Federal Agency |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NGO | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Local Government | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Local unions) | | | |

The State of Alaska is the lead for preparing and implementing SIP revisions in close coordination with Fairbanks North Star Borough.

MOVING FORWARD:

- EPA is working with ADEC to obtain reliable information related to the cost of imposing controls on certain electricity generating utilities.
- Preliminary technical analysis by Alaska indicates that the area could attain the standards as early as 2024, and EPA continues to work with the state to confirm these projections and ensure that planning requirements are satisfied. EPA will continue to work closely with ADEC and the Fairbanks North Star Borough to provide technical and financial assistance to address the PM_{2.5} issues in this area.

LEAD OFFICE/REGION: REGION10 ARD
OAR

OTHER KEY OFFICES/REGIONS: OAQPS, OGC,